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**Group Work Overview**

**The aim of this resource is to:**

* **encourage you to consider the role of group work in the academic environment; and**
* **help you improve on your group-work skills.**

**Why do Group Work? Group work:**

* allows for collaborative learning;
* offers students support;
* reduces workload;
* facilitates tasks through sharing; and
* prepares students for the world of work.

**What is Group Work? Group work:**

* has a membership of two or more people;
* encourages a sense of shared identity and common goals among members;
* promotes a feeling of interaction and interdependence among members; and
* instils in its members a sense of achieving something together.

**Tip: A Group Work Activity**

**When you are asked to work on a group project:**

1. **Begin by thinking about the topic on your own**
2. **Then discuss ideas in pairs**
3. **Build arguments in fours**
4. **Communicate your thinking in a whole group plenary**

Source Adapted from: Burns, T & Sandra, S 2009, *Essential study skills: the complete guide to success at   
 university*, 2nd edn, Sage, London.

**Types of Group Work**

* Class discussion or activity
  + Collective activity that you are asked to do in class.
* Tutorials
  + Two or more students working together on a topic or task.
* Seminars
  + Group of 15 – 20 students working together.
  + Activities may include class discussion, reading being undertaken, or working together on an issue related to a lecture.
* Group assignments
  + When students are asked to produce something collectively (e.g. oral presentation, report, etc.).

**How to Work Effectively in a Group?**

* Get to know everyone in the group.
* Ensure that all group members feel comfortable with each other.
* Make sure that everybody knows everyone’s name and contact details.
  + Leave no one out of the discussion. Include people who:
    - are naturally quiet; and
    - do not speak English as their first language.
  + Consider everyone’s needs and expectations.

**Some Common Problems Associated with Group Work**

* Group work is usually assessed.
* Students do not want their grade based on the effort of other people.
* Students are usually resentful of those in their group who do not pull their weight.
* There is much resentment about group members who do not turn up or who do not stay on track.

**Resolving Group Conflicts**

* Do not get angry and frustrated with your group members.
* Resolve the problems that you encounter.
* Discover the real problem and find a solution.

**Tip: Do a SWOT Analysis of your Group**

**SWOT stands for Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats**

* What are your group work strengths? What do you already like about group work and the way that you perform in a group?
* What are your weaknesses? What do you really dislike about group work and/or your own performance in groups?
* What opportunities are there for you in group work?
* What threats?
* Discuss your answers with a friend.
* What do the answers tell you about yourself?
* What are you going to differently next time?
* What are you going to do now?

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